

## New Zealanders Lazy, Smug, American Says

By RUSSELL ELMAN  
WELLINGTON, N.Z. (CP) — A

scathing condemnation of New Zealand in a new book by an American professor has probably aroused more soul-searching among New Zealanders than any other publication in recent years.

In his controversial *Fern and the Tiki*, David Ausubel, a psychiatrist who spent a year here on a Fulbright fellowship, be-

rates New Zealanders as being insular, smug, lazy, ill-disciplined and complacent. He finds the national character and attitudes molded (for the worse) by the welfare state, juvenile delinquency rampant, and race relations between whites and Maoris less than perfect.

His sweeping criticisms, though ridiculed by some reviewers as unadulterated nonsense, have fired a hot national debate among many thinking people in government, business and education on where the nation is heading.

### COMFORTABLE LIFE

In this election year many New Zealanders are asking themselves in a critical self-analysis whether the welfare state has run its full course, whether social security and full employment have bred inertia, and whether this is a young country grown prematurely old.

Today New Zealand's 2,600,000 inhabitants, predominantly of British stock, proudly boast one of the world's highest per capita incomes, no unemployment to speak of, excellent health standards, and a large measure of social security providing free hospital care, child allowances, universal superannuation. Life is leisurely and yet comfortable without the hypertension of North American society.

Whether Prime Minister Walter Nash's Labor party is returned for another three years or the Opposition National party regains office, no fundamental alterations in the structure of the welfare state are envisaged. But some claim that under Labor rule New Zealand has suffered a loss of individual enterprise and initiative clearly evident in the country's daily living.

### HOTEL SERVICE BAD

At work, tea breaks may seem to take precedence over getting a job done; in shops, assistants are frequently idle to a point of discourtesy to the prospective customer; beneath an outward atmosphere of friendliness, service in many hotels is notoriously bad; at weekends labor regulations appear to bring the country to a standstill except for rugby and horse racing, or more accurately betting at off-course government totalisator shops.

In a society where every man claims he's as good as his neighbor, where excessive wealth and abject poverty are unknown, where living is easy going, there seems a constant pressure for conformity.

Business circles complain of too much control vested in the hands of government officials mainly through their power to grant or withhold import permits, for without imported materials New Zealand's secondary industries could not survive.

### USE INCENTIVE BONUS

Management also tends to criticize some aspects of trade unionism such as compulsory overtime pay for Saturday and Sunday work, and featherbedding of jobs.

But progressive-minded companies have begun to institute incentive bonus schemes and executives say that given proper direction and work to do New Zealand employees compare favorably with workers in any country. Prosperity to some extent has tamed union militance, work stoppages are few and disputes

few are settled without going to arbitration.

Teachers in the past resented a state-regulated wage scale in which their salaries were geared to civil service pay rates. University salaries recently were raised following a royal commission report, but at one time a qualified schoolteacher might not earn much more than a lower-graded clerk.

### MIGRATE TO AUSTRALIA

Each year young doctors, scientists, junior executives migrate to Australia or Britain because they find insufficient scope for advancement at home.

Youngsters often travel around the world on so-called working holidays, picking up jobs where they can until they can move on to another country. But many

young persons, particularly if married, prefer the security at home. Stable jobs with regular pay increments and the benefits of the welfare state tend to attract the less adventurous to New Zealand's disproportionately large civil service, or such "safe" careers as teaching or white-collar clerical work. Commerce lately has begun to hold greater appeal as a career prospect.

### FARM EDUCATION

Although New Zealand lives on its farms — through exports of butter, cheese, meat, wool — it's difficult for a young man to start out on his own farm without heavy financial backing. However, by a system of sharemilking (or farming) youngsters can over a period of years hope to save enough eventually to purchase their own land.

Within New Zealand farmers receive the usual share of criticism for enjoying a supposedly easy living off the land without much effort. However, they probably put in as good a day's work as anyone else, and the sheep-shearers hold an enviable string of world records for speed and efficiency. More attention is being given to agricultural education, and today it is a common sight to see low-flying aircraft top-dressing the green fields.

### AVERAGE \$45 WEEKLY

Married couples find New Zealand's heavy income tax burdensome without high wages to provide additional purchasing power to meet relatively high living costs. A New Zealander, earning on the average about \$45 a week, pays up to three times as much for an (imported) car as a Canadian or Briton; his house costs as much as in Canada, and imported manufactured goods are all expensive. Rents and foods are lower than in most countries.

Wives frequently work and husbands hold second jobs to supplement family incomes. But a 25-per-cent tax rate for secondary employment sometimes has the effect of placing a stamp of official discouragement on holding more than one job.

### "DON'T DIE AT 46"

But in the final analysis few New Zealanders would probably wish to change their lot. Barring some unforeseen disaster, to them a country in which they can always be sure of a job, a roof over their heads, plenty to eat, care in sickness and old age, and a secure future for their children, with a maximum amount of leisure, is near enough to life's ideal.

New Zealanders have their share of material comforts with one in three families owning a car — not necessarily the latest model — and most homes are equipped with refrigerators, vacuum cleaners and washing machines. But as for keeping up with the North American Joneses across the Pacific ocean, or the Australian Joneses across the Tasman Sea, the New Zealander's rejoinder is "we don't die of heart attacks at the age of 40."